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RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000213

SIPDIS
STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, AF/PDPA, DRL, INR/AA
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/26
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UNGA](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: GOLDSTONE FOLLOW UP AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRIORITIES

REF: STATE 15722; STATE 16234; ABUJA 0211 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy
Abuja, Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) PolOffs delivered demarches (refs a and b) to Foreign Ministry International Organizations Director Ambassador M.K. Ibrahim February 24. Ibrahim accepted U.S. points on the upcoming vote in New York, but told us he could "not see a way to change Nigeria's vote on Goldstone." Due to the importance Nigeria places on the bilateral relationship with the U.S., however, we could witness an abstention. END SUMMARY.

PERCEPTION IS KEY

¶2. (C) Given that Nigeria chaired the Human Rights Council (HRC) session when the Goldstone vote occurred, Ibrahim focused his response on the appearance of Nigeria reversing its vote completely, rather than on the merits of the U.S. argument. He told PolOffs that he had heard all sides of the issue, including during two meetings with Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria Moshe Ram here in Abuja, but concluded that "it would look odd and be very difficult to reverse it at this stage."

ABSTENTION NOT DISCOUNTED

¶3. (C) Ibrahim became less certain when PolOff reiterated U.S.

points, replying that "I wished this had been solved earlier, as each incremental stage makes it harder for us." Ibrahim added that he felt the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) could have been avoided altogether. While informing us that he could not consider switching Nigeria's vote to agree with the U.S., he reluctantly admitted that "the best we could do is an abstention on the issue." He volunteered that he could not ask another nation to change its vote.

U.S. DOUBLE STANDARD

¶4. (C) Ibrahim frankly told PolOff that our argument about keeping human rights issues solely within the HRC in Geneva did not "hold water" when it came to our human rights discussion on Iran. While he did not blatantly state so, Ibrahim implied that the U.S. has a double standard in raising Iran at the UNGA, but keeping Palestine and Goldstone at the HRC in Geneva.

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HRC PRIORITIES

¶5. (SBU) Ibrahim also reviewed points on U.S. priorities for the HRC session, but offered no immediate, substantive response. He will travel to Geneva March 3 to be part of Nigeria's Delegation. He also confirmed Nigeria's just-returned Ambassador to Switzerland and the HRC has assumed duties as the MFA's Permanent Secretary. Ibrahim agreed with his colleagues on the Americas Desk that human rights issues would take on greater importance under the leadership of new Permanent Secretary Ambassador Dr. Martin Ihoeoghian Uhomoibhi.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Following our exchange with Ambassador Ibrahim, Nigeria appears more concerned about the appearance of fickleness -- having chaired the HRC Session that voted to advance the Goldstone report to the UNGA. That said, the GON considers our bilateral relationship as vitally important and may end up abstaining on Friday's draft resolution. Our interlocutors throughout the MFA have advised us that Ambassador Ibrahim provides voting instructions to the Nigerian Mission in New York. With no clear authority in the Presidential Villa at the moment (ref c), Ibrahim's instructions will not likely be overruled from Nigeria's executive, as witnessed in the past. END COMMENT.
SANDERS